

CPC Minutes of August 21, 2012

A regular meeting of the City Plan Commission (CPC) was held on Tuesday, August 21, 2012 at 4:49 p.m. in the Department of the Planning and Development (DPD) 1st Floor Meeting Room, 444 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Opening Session

Call to order: Chairman Durkee called the meeting to order at 4:48 p.m.

Members Present: Chairman Stephen Durkee, JoAnn Ryan, Harrison Bilodeau, Ina Anderson and Christine West

Members Absent: Meredyth Church and Andrew Cortes

Staff Present: Robert Azar and Choyon Manjrekar

Approval of meeting minutes from July 17th, 2012: Ms. Anderson made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau to approve the minutes. All voted in favor.

Director's Report: Mr. Azar presented the Director's report to update the CPC on matters that had appeared before them. He said the zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan changes required for the land development project at 257 Thayer Street had been approved by the City Council on condition that the DPD conduct a detailed study of the Thayer Street area. He said the DPD had been preparing for the study. The Council also approved the zoning ordinance, comprehensive plan changes and street abandonments required for the land development project at 60 Cedar Street. Both projects would return to the CPC for preliminary plan approval.

Mr. Azar said the Council also voted to create three tiers for entertainment with different regulations. Incidental entertainment, which involves musicians or background music without a cover charge is permitted by right in some zones. Anything other than incidental entertainment would be prohibited in C-1 and C-2 zones. He said the land development project at 66 Huber Avenue whose master plan was approved by the CPC the previous month was appealed and would be heard before the zoning board in September. He said that item 1 of the agenda should be continued as the matter was under appeal.

Mr. Durkee asked about traffic calming measures on Federal Hill and a discussion on traffic calming ensued.

MINOR LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1. Case No. 12-027MI – 66 Huber Ave.

The applicant will be presenting a community outreach plan for the subject development – for discussion (Manton, AP 80 Lot 894)

Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau to continue the item. All voted in favor.

INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN

2. Johnson and Wales University Master Plan Amendment

The applicant is seeking an amendment to the current Master Plan for creation of a new academic program in an existing building – for action (Downtown)

Mr. Durkee asked for a motion to appoint an acting chair. He recused himself and left the table. Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau nominating Ms. West as acting chair. All voted in favor.

Mr. Manjrekar introduced the item, an amendment to the Institutional Master Plan (IMP) for Johnson and Wales University (JWU) that primarily dealt with the creation of a physician's assistant program, a statement on the University's acquisition of land from the I-195 relocation and plans for other parts of campus.

Mr. Christopher Placco presented the IMP for JWU. He said the 2008 master plan proposed acquiring parcels 31, 35 and 36 of the I-195 land, but the university was dropping its bid for parcel 35 to focus development on parcels 31 and 36. He said infrastructure on the parcels would not be available by June 2014, when JWU intends to begin operating a physician assistant graduate program. He said the university acquired a building at 157 Clifford Street for the new program, which would have 90 students and 11 faculty. There would be adequate parking on site and in a new university parking structure in proximity to the building.

Mr. Placco said the University would not develop land from the 195 transfer until a clear plan was developed. He used a map to describe other development around campus.

Ms. Anderson asked what the CPC's role was in reviewing the IMP amendment. Mr. Azar said approving the amendment would allow the applicant to apply for permits. Modifications to the building may require review by the Downtown Design Review Committee or the 195 commission. Ms. Anderson asked about the University's relationship to neighboring properties. Mr. Placco used a map to describe neighboring uses and said he expected a synergy between Rhode Island Hospital and Brown University.

Mr. Manjrekar read out the DPD's staff report, which found the plan to conform to the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau to approve the IMP amendment. All voted in favor.

MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – PUBLIC HEARING

3. Case No. 12-032MA – Creation of expansion parking area at 173 Valley Street (Master/Preliminary Plan review)

The applicant is seeking to increase the capacity of an existing parking lot from 36 to 96 spaces to accommodate the growth of a business on a proximate lot. The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary stages of review – for action (Olneyville, AP 33 Lots 322, 345, 350, 351, 395, 624, 654, 656)

Mr. Durkee returned to chair the meeting. Ms. Anderson recused herself and left the meeting.

Mr. Manjrekar introduced the project, which was being reviewed as a Major Land Development project as over 50 parking spaces were being requested. He said the applicant was requesting to combine master and preliminary plan stages of review.

Mr. Mark Van Noppen introduced the project. He said he was a partner of the Rising Sun Mills development and that the parking spaces were being requested for a tenant with a growing business. Mr. Durkee asked if the tenant had renewed the lease. He said the tenant had given up the option to terminate the lease and moved into a larger portion of the property in exchange for more parking. He said he had been leasing the subject property, which had become contaminated, making it necessary to cap the site. The property is occupied by an HVAC business. He said the addition at the western end of the building would be demolished to accommodate some parking spaces. An underground injection system would be used for stormwater management.

Mr. Van Noppen said the site would be fully landscaped and exceeded the canopy coverage requirement. Mr. Manjrekar asked Mr. Van Noppen to speak about pedestrian movement between both sites. Mr. Van Noppen said that a solar powered cross walk light would be installed for pedestrian crossing. Ms. West asked if the applicant had submitted a lighting plan. Mr. Van Noppen said the location of light sources had not been finalized. Mr. Durkee said the lighting plan could be submitted at the final plan stage. Ms. West said that light spillover should be minimized. She said the proposal balanced the need for growth with economic development as outlined in the comprehensive

plan. Mr. Durkee said the planting along the Valley Street edge should be suitable. A discussion on landscaping ensued.

Mr. Oscar Lemus asked why the applicant needed more parking when parking spaces were created on the Rising Sun Mills site. Mr. Van Noppen said the development lost 33 parking spaces due to the construction of a bike path and 90 spaces would be temporarily lost during construction. Mr. Lemus said the applicant had received a loan from the Providence Economic Development Partnership (PEDP) and was concerned about repayment of the loan. Mr. Azar said it would be the PEDP's responsibility to ensure that the loan was repaid.

Mr. Manjrekar read out the DPD's staff report which found the project to conform to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance and recommended that the CPC combine the master and preliminary plan stages of development and approve them subject to the conditions of approval contained in the staff report.

Mr. Bilodeau asked about the impact on the taxable value of the property if the building was demolished. Ms. Lauren Garzone from the tax assessor's office who was in the audience said a request could be made to have the assessor perform a valuation on the site. Mr. Azar said a valuation would not be requested, but the assessor would take the work performed on site into account. A discussion on taxation ensued. Mr. Van Noppen said the CPC could request a presentation from the tax assessor for more information on tax matters. He said factors like the cost of asphalt would be considered when determining how to tax the property. Mr. Durkee said it may not be appropriate for the CPC to advise the assessor. Mr. Bilodeau said a recommendation could be made to review tax policy.

Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Ms. West to combine the master and preliminary plan stages of review. All voted in favor. Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Ms. West to approve the master and preliminary plan subject to the conditions contained in the DPD's staff report. All voted in favor.

Adjournment

Ms. Ryan made a motion seconded by Mr. Bilodeau to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'C. Manjrekar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Choyon Manjrekar,

Recording Secretary